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ABSTRACT

During the third quarter of 1973 (July through September) the Children's Television Workshop (CTW) evaluated old material and planned new programing. The fourth season of Sesame Street and the second season of The Electric Company were rerun through the summer by most of the public and commercial television stations that carried the shows throughout the school year. A nationwide research study indicated that The Electric Company, now in its second season, is watched by 3.5 million in school, an increase of more than half a million viewers over the first season. Another three million watch the program at home. Research indicated that the series meets its reading instruction objective. No general changes in the curriculum for The Electric Company are planned, but there will be some changes in emphasis. Sesame Street's new programing will give fuller treatment in the bilingual/bicultural area as well as in the area of emotions and feelings. Because of reduction in funding from public sources, new funding sources and investments are being explored. (Author/WCM)

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# CHILDREN'S TELEVISION WORKSHOP

## PROGRESS REPORT

OE Bureau of Research No. 8-0475. Grant No. OEG-0-8-080475-3743 (007)
Period: July 1, 1973 - September 30, 1973
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Name of Institution: Children's Television Workshop

Name of Project Director: rs. Joan Ganz Cooney

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1. Major Activities and Accomplishments During This Period.

During the third quarter of 1973 (July through September), the fourth season of SESAME STREET and the second season of THE ELECTRIC COMPANY were repeated by most of the public and commercial television stations that carried the shows throughout the school year. The re-broadcast, for the most part, followed the school-year pattern the stations used -- twice daily, once daily, and/or weekend telecasting.

The summer months were also used in a variety of ways to improve the material for the forthcoming season, taping for which began in August. Budget cuts have made less new production possible, and efforts were made to analyze and test existing material to see what could be re-used with maximum effectiveness vis a vis the programs' educational goals. The educational advisory groups for each of the shows were extremely helpful to research and production staffs in this regard.

The advisors recommended no general changes in the curriculum for THE ELECTRIC COMPANY, but did suggest some changes in emphasis which were intended to retain the show's high entertainment appeal but minimize any conflict between educational goals and entertainment. For example, the advisors urged more stress on strategies to teach the process of reading, especially blending, scanning, and using context clues. They recommended greater use of program material proceeding from left to right on the screen, to show visually the movement of reading. A new list of blending syllables was prepared and rebuses were revised. The new season's materials were to give the viewers a longer period of time to view print before giving the audio answers. A general mood of less busyness and less clutter on the screen, with

fewer fast-paced segments, was suggested for the new season. These suggestions will be incorporated into the new material, which will comprise about 25% of the next season.

Plans were made to convene a fall seminar on metalinguistics, to develop ways to visualize the unspoken verbal processes that competent readers utilize.

Similarly, the summer months were used by SESAME STREET staff and advisors to analyze existing material, with an eye toward retiring segments that were out-of-date or could now be done better, to set aside some that had been used too often for a "rest," and to separate those that could profitably be incorporated into shows for the next season. SESAME STREET's new programing will give fuller treatment to its new goals in the bilingual/bicultural area and in the affective area of emotions and feelings. Guidelines for these new goals and curriculum suggestions grew out of meetings with appropriate advisors. Priorities for the new goals will be based on research into the target audience's needs and reactions to experimental segments tried during the previous seasons.

Pretesting of innovative material to determine the effectiveness of both curriculum content and production techniques went forward during the period, along with re-evaluation of the appeal of old segments. The staff also used the period between production seasons to refine ways to measure appeal and comprehension of segments. For instance, studies of eye movement patterns were made during the period and use of time-lapse photos to test attention-holding.

THE ELECTRIC COMPANY cast gave its first live appearance at Lincoln Center on two Saturdays in August, to enable elementary school students, teachers and parents to interact with their favorite television

personalities and to focus public attention on the educational value of the first TV program designed for classroom use to win an Emmy award. This cast appearance would be followed by others throughout the nation during the school year, emulating the highly successful SESAME STREET cast appearances that reach tens of thousands of children, parents and teachers.

2. Problems.

The chief problems during the period came about as the result of reduced funding from public sources. Although the long-range possibilities for self-generated income for the Workshop give cause for optimism, the short-range picture necessitated stringent economies. The problem of continuing to present high-quality, high-appeal programs to children, most of whom are repeat viewers from the previous season, had to be solved with reduced staff and reduced budget.

The problem was perhaps most acute for SESAME STREET because, although research conclusively proves that animation is the most effective way to reach SESAME STREET viewers, animation is also the most expensive production technique. Therefore, during this period, material that perhaps could be conveyed better through animation was re-done for the use of live actors in the studio.

Efforts went forward by the CTW Board of Trustees and the staff to identify and explore new funding and investment possibilities. The non-broadcast materials division, on the recommendations of advisors, launched a variety of new product ideas for toys, books and learning materials, into the pretesting stage. A feasibility study was undertaken, too, into the possibility of raising funds from the public by direct mail.

3. Significant Findings and Events.

Two separate nationwide research studies on THE ELECTRIC COMPANY found that, during its second season, the daily program had increased its widespread popularity among students and their teachers and was getting across the reading curriculum it is designed to teach.

A year-long investigation by the Educational Testing Service of 8,000 of the program's 6.5 million viewers indicated that children who watched the show in their classrooms made significant gains over non-viewers in the reading skills the program is designed to teach.

Several other key findings were underlined in the ETS report, issued in September:

- The program is an effective instructional supplement for target-age children in the bottom half of their class who are just beginning to experience reading difficulty.
- Although first-graders are not the primary target audience, the program is effective with them, too.
- The program has a significant impact on third and fourth-grade pupils, although the effect is somewhat less than that with children in lower grades.
- The program is successful in producing gains for first and second-grade pupils across almost all of the 19 major curriculum areas built into the program and tested by the study. Some positive effects on a section of the standardized Metropolitan Achievement reading test were also found.
- The programs' effects are similar for children of all groups -- Spanish-background, Blacks, whites. boys, girls.
- Teachers like the program and find it useful in teaching and reviewing certain reading skills. (See Appendix A for the full text of the ETS Study.)

The second study was conducted by Dr. Roland J. Liebert of Florida State University in association with the Research Triangle Institute of North Carolina, and showed that one out of every three elementary schools in the nation used THE ELECTRIC COMPANY as a classroom tool to impart basic reading skills during the second season. Some 3.5 million children now see the program in school, an increase of more than half a million viewers over the first season. (Another 3 million children watch the show at home.) The percentage of in-school viewers would be higher if all schools were equipped for viewing. Of the schools in the nation with full television capability, 58% of them made use of THE ELECTRIC COMPANY in its second season.

The teachers' responses to the study were enthusiastic. Some 87% of the teachers said that "very favorable" would characterize their over-all opinions about the program. A similar percentage of teachers report some gains in specific reading skills which they attributed directly to the program. Specifically, 36% of teachers noted a "great improvement" in the ability of their pupils to decode words as a result of watching the series; 25% noted "great improvement" in the ability of students to spell; 38% singled out improvement in basic sight vocabulary as the result of viewing. (See Appendix B for full text.)

A variety of other research projects by staff and advisors were aimed primarily at discovering the show's elements that proved particularly effective with poor readers or non-readers. Dr. Courtney B. Cazden, Professor of Education at the Harvard University Graduate School of Education and an advisor to CTW, continued her studies on classroom responses. She selected six ethnically diverse elementary school classrooms in Cambridge, Massachusetts, with both normal and poor readers, to test six episodes from the second season. Her findings showed that a new animated film, "Letterman," a superhero who saves words, which was tested

during the second season, had strong attention-holding power with poor readers. As a result, "Letterman" will be a regular feature in the third season. Dr. Cazden also made observations on teacher attitude and teaching style toward the show, as well as on classroom arrangement for viewing, that will be helpful in training teachers and others who serve as mediators for children viewing.

In research into variables that can be combined for educational effectiveness, Dr. Barbara Fowles, associate director of research for THE ELECTRIC COMPANY, found that poor readers try harder for a word if it is needed to solve a problem.

The results of these and other studies will be incorporated into program segments for the third season, which goes on the air October 22.

4. Dissemination Activities.

The Community Education Services division, through its eight regional offices, continued to utilize a wide variety of people interested in both of CTW's programs to increase access to viewing, to heighten the possibility of achieving the programs' educational goals, and to inform parents, teachers and the general public about the processes used to attain the shows' goals.

Following on the previous summer's success in training enrollees in the Neighborhood Youth Corps to supervise viewing of SESAME STREET by children in community viewing centers, CES conducted workshops this summer for high school tutors working with preschoolers in day-care centers and other sites. The eight-week tutoring program, typically done in cooperation with local government agencies, was conducted in 20 cities in July and August.

In addition, the CES division throughout the year conducts workshops for teachers, college students, home visitors, day-care personnel, and parents, imparting the educational goals of both programs and how

adults in various settings can be mediators to heighten the effectiveness of the programs. It is estimated that as many of 100,000 tutors and paraprofessionals are involved in utilizing both SESAME STREET and THE ELECTRIC COMPANY.

Although there is less emphasis now setting up viewing centers for the programs, this remains a subsidiary goal since, obviously, the programs cannot be effective if children cannot see them. CES staff works with a variety of public and private agencies wanting advice on how to set up a viewing center. In addition, a monthly publication goes out through the CES regional offices to present activities ideas for professional and non-professional adults in the viewing centers and to pass along good ideas generated in one community for adaptation in another.

Special efforts were launched during this period to reach children in isolated areas. For instance, in isolated pockets of Appalachia, the use of audio cassettes is being tried on a small scale. Mothers in these communities are given cassettes, with tapes explaining SESAME STREET goals and suggesting activities to conduct with the children after viewing. This has already led to Mothers Cooperatives, with sharing of viewing supervision and watching over non-viewing children. A blank tape is available for the mothers to send queries they might have to the Workshop for answers on tapes, thus getting around the problem of parent illiteracy. The group viewing, in turn, has led to mini-schools in the isolated regions, with children as young as 9 to 11 trained to serve as volunteer tutors for preschoolers, with the young tutors supervised by the mothers.

During this period, the problem of access to the programs was tackled directly by the American Optometic Association Auxiliary, working cooperatively with the Workshop. Over 100 chapters of the

Auxiliary adopted as a major project the securing of TV sets to place in some 6,000 day-care centers. The project is called "Open Sesame," and the CES division prepared a manual for the chapters on how to carry out their project aim.

The Workshop's Department of Public Information prepared new press kits for both SESAME STREET and THE ELECTRIC COMPANY for the launching of the new seasons in the fall. The department also continuing the publication of a newsletter on Workshop activities, and continue its response to mail and inquiries from viewers and from public TV stations.

5. Capital Equipment Acquisition.

CTW has acquired office furniture and equipment as normally required in day-to-day operations.

6. Data Collection.

In addition to the research studies mentioned above, work went forward on testing the appeal and effectiveness of bilingual/bicultural segments of SESAME STREET. Actually, the formative research for both programs is daily, on-going activity, involving child testing and teacher response spanning a broad spectrum of curricular goals. In addition, advisors to CTW work closely with staff, often on a one-to-one basis, to give their counsel on very specific program elements.

It has been apparent from SESAME STREET's first season that it has wide appeal for preschoolers. What was not anticipated is the appeal for preschoolers that THE ELECTRIC COMPANY apparently has. CTW had hoped to test the impact of both shows on the pre-target-age children this year, but was unable to carry out the project because of reduced funding.

However, on a small scale, field observations were made during this

period with preschoolers to see their reactions to THE ELECTRIC COMPANY and to begin to get at the shows specific effectiveness with them. This kind of study could be meaningful for the future, since it might well reveal the program's preventive rather than remedial effectiveness.

7. Other Activities.

The first sample segments of material for the new CTW health series, which is financed independently of government funds, were ready for previewing and pretesting in August. Meanwhile, staffing for the series continued, as the show got nearer to actual production. However, seminars with health practitioners continued to provide information on the audiences to be reached and to establish priorities for the show. In addition to working with advisors on the ordering of priorities and drawing up specifications for the curriculum, the research division began to organize itself to conduct the kinds of studies needed to determine the health series' effectiveness and appeal. Other division such as Community Education Services, similarly were involved in such aspects as greater utilization of the series at the community level, publicity on the series, and the possible preparation of needed supplementary materials.

CTW's International division continued to broaden SESAME STREET's world-wide audience and began efforts to make THE ELECTRIC COMPANY available for viewing in foreign countries. SESAME STREET is now seen in over 50 countries, with versions available in Spanish, Portugese, and German.

In this country, CTW now has licensed books, playthings, records and school publications, designed to reinforce the educational goals of the two programs. These products are produced by contractual agreement with publishers and manufacturers, at no cost to CTW, and follow stringent

guidelines regarding curriculum and advertising as laid down by the Workshop. Income from the sale of the items is recycled to support the production of the television programs.

8. Staff Utilization.

Additions during this period.

| Name | Title | Date of Employment |
|---|---|---|
| Alexander Bitker | Director of Finance | 7/1/73 |
| Susan Wintner | Employment Coordinator | 7/12/73 |
| Betty Smith | Supervisor - Records Management | 7/10/73 |
| George Arias | Financial Analyst | 7/16/73 |
| Janet Paige | Editor - Electric Co. Guide | 7/16/73 |
| Arlene Brickner | Researcher | 7/9/73 |
| Martha Lugo | Administrative Asst. | 7/23/73 |
| Martha Torres | Researcher | 7/23/73 |
| James Webster | Research Assistant | 7/18/73 |
| Robert Bright | Asst. Field Svs. Coord. CES | 8/13/73 |
| Penny Ertelt | Marketing Coord. | 8/6/73 |
| Duncan Kenworthy | Editorial Coord. | 8/13/73 |
| Lamarian Hayes | Research Asst. | 8/20/73 |
| Girvin Kirk | Director of Research-Sesame Street | 8/27/73 |

Terminations during this period:

| Name | Title | Date of Termination |
|---|---|---|
| Renee Cherow | Audio Visual Advisor | 7/16/73 |
| Shanna McNeill | Educational Researcher | 7/13/73 |
| John Page | Producer | 7/20/73 |
| Richard Smith | Coordinator CES | 8/3/73 |
| Joyce Weil | Director of Research-Health Show | 8/3/73 |
| Sharon Coleman | Researcher | 8/30/73 |
| Lawrence Sheppard | Asst. Field Svs. Coordinator - CES | 8/10/73 |
| Alicia Frankl | Accounting Analyst | 8/31/73 |
| Rene Martinez | Asst. State Coord. - CES | 8/31/73 |
| Marsha Chaykin | Graphis Coord. | 9/21/73 |
| William Smith | Production Asst. | 9/28/73 |

9. Future.

Major new efforts are planned to generate new sources of funding, including self-generated funds. During this period, CTW acquired 24% ownership of Cablevision Holdings, Inc., a new Hawaiian company with the cable franchise for Honolulu. The ownership of stock was through CTW's wholly-owned subsidiary, CTW Communications, Inc., which will be investigating other investment and income-producing possibilities in the months and years ahead.

Various research studies are planned to determine the effect of viewing CTW programs on the various ethnic groups. It is hoped that funding will be available to test the effectiveness of THE ELECTRIC COMPANY with adult illiterates and with developmentally handicapped children.

Classroom materials and a magazine for teachers using THE ELECTRIC COMPANY are planned for the new season.